SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY: I also attended the same meeting. (*Interruptions*) I do not need a certificate here. I attended the same meeting. There was no such agreement amongst the Opposition leaders. Mr. Bommai may have agreed, but the fact of the matter is, once the Government makes a statement, we must know the exact position. (*Interruptions*) We did not agree. There was no agreement. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI P. UPENDRA (Andhra Pradesh) Sir, I do not know what is the difficulty. (*Interruptions*) Do you agree to a statement or you agree to allow a discussion? (*Interruptions*)

SHRI G. G. SWELL (Meghalaya) There is no need for duplication. Either there should be a full discussion or there should be a Calling Attention. I would prefer a full discussion on it, Sir.

श्री कृष्ण लाल शर्मा (हिमाचल प्रदेश) : आपने हाऊस का कंसेनसस ले लिया है . . . (व्यवधान)

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Sir, it is always the pleasure of the Chairman to decide such issues. We leave it to you. We want a full-fledged discussion on Bombay. That is all. We leave it to you for a discussion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We will have a full-fledged discussion, but the pattern I follow is to be that of a Calling Attention.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Recomendation of experts team for Jharia coalfields fire

*261. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN:†
SHRI VIREN J. SHAH:

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government sent a team of experts to United States to examine the details of new technology which could effectively control the spread of fire in coal mines if so, who were the members of the team;

(b) whether the team has submitted its report so far;

(c) if so, what are the details of its recommendations which have been accepted by Government and those not accepted and the reasons therefor;

(d) what steps Government have so far taken to implement the recommendations; and

(e) whether Government have prepared any Action Plan in this regard, if so, what are the details of financial aspects thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (c) Yes, Sir. A team comprising the following Mining Engineers was deputed by the Government of India to the Departmet of Interior, Office of Surface Mining, Pittsburgh, United States, in November, 1991 to examine the available technologies to control extinguish fire in Jharia Coalfield:

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*The Question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Pramod Mahajan.

(i) Shri S. N. Jha, Regional Director, Regional Institute-2, Central Mine Planning and Design Institute, Dhanbad.

(ii) Shri A. P. Singh, Additional Chief Mining Engineer, Regional Institute-2, Central Mine Planning and Design Institute, Dhanbad.

(iii) Shri N. D. Agarwal, Additional Chief Mining Engineer, Central Mine Planning & Design Institute, Ranchi.

(iv) Shri K. K. Malhotra, Deputy Chief Mining Engineer, Bharat Coking Coal Limited, Dhanbad.

The team has since submitted the report and indicated that in addition to methods already being tried some of the following technologies could possibly be applied to deal with Jharia Coalfield fires—

(i) Use of hydromonitors for quenching the fire followed by excavation of heated debris and coal;

(ii) Drilling under high temperature conditions and infusion of foams through boreholes;

(iii) Use of expanded cement-slurry mix for sealing of the cracks and stabilising the area.

(d) and (e) On the basis of the report submitted by the team, Coal India was asked to formulate an Action Plan. Subsequently the matter was discussed with World Bank for technical and financial assistance. The World Bank has since agreed to provide assistance for a diagonstic study for development of programme to deal with the coalfield fires. IDA credit for US $ 12 million has recently been approved out of a total envisaged investment of US $ 14.3 million.

श्री प्रमोद महाजन : सभापति जी, कोयला क्षेत्र में आग, ये एक बहुआयामी समस्या है । इसमें जैविक हानि होती है । कोयला जैसी बहुमूल्य नैसर्गिक संपदा नष्ट होती है और पर्यावरण के लिए भी एक भीषण संकट निर्माण होता है । बिहार के झरिया कोयला क्षेत्र में पहली आग तो 1916 में लगी थी लेकिन गत 20 वर्षों में 70 आगों में 4 लाख टन कोयला नष्ट हुआ है और लगभग 200 करोड़ टन कोयला वहां अटका पड़ा है । इस स्थिति के प्रकाश में यदि उत्तर को देखें तो निराशा होती है । 20 वर्ष के बाद 2 वर्ष पूर्व अध्ययन दल अमरीका गया । उसने रिपोर्ट दी । विश्व बैंक ने धन की सहायता की सहमति दी फिर भी उत्तर में कोल इंडिया की ओर से किस प्रकार की कार्यवाही योजना की जा रही है, इस के बारे में कोई ब्यौरा दिया नहीं गया है । इसलिए मैं सरकार से यह जानना चाहता हूं कि इस कोयले की आग बुझाने की दृष्टि से जो अध्ययन दल अमरीका गया था, जिसने अपनी रिपोर्ट दे दी, जिसको विश्व बैंक ने सहायता करने का आश्वासन दे दिया, सहमति दे दी, यह आपकी कार्यवाही योजना क्या है, इसका ब्यौरा क्या है? यह कब से लागू होगी और इसके लागू होने से कितने समय में कोयले की आग पर लगभग आप काबू पा सकेंगे ? इस कार्यवाही योजना का साफिर ब्यौरा क्या है, मैं इस पर जरूर जानना चाहता हूं ।

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, so far as the steps taken by the Government are concerned, a Committee was constituted. After it was constituted, it was deputed abroad in November, 1991. The names of the members are already given in the reply. They spent ten working days in the United States to study the problem. Thereafter they came back on the 24th November, 1991, made a quick report on the 26th November, 1991. That report was sent immediately to all concerned. Sir, the final report was submitted in February, 1992 by this Committee which was circulated in Rajya Sabha on the 1st June, 1992, on the demand made by some of the hon. Members.

In addition to the steps already being taken, I find that the Committte made three main recommendations which I have stated here and I need not repeat them. All the three main recommendations needed diagnostic study for the development programme as well as money. That is why the report was sent immediately to Coal India Limited for making an action plan. According to the action plan, whatever money is required, that was also agreed to. As I said earlier, in January, 1993, IDA credit of Rs. 36 crores has been made available.

The hon. Member wanted to know, what has been done. In addition to the three methods, there was certain other methods which have also been applied. So far as the other methods are concerned, they are given in the report itself. The hon. Member wanted to know the summary of it. The first one is, trench cutting and its filling with non-combustible material. The second one is, water circulation under pressure and cementation. The third one is digging out completely, and isolation. And the fourth one is, inert gas infusion with a view to keep the oxygen out.

Sir, these are the steps already being taken by Coal India Ltd. Applying those steps—not the new steps suggested by the Committee—Coal India Ltd. has been able to extinguish five main fires within the Jharia coalfield. The coal saved is 95 million tonnes. The value of the coal saved from those fires is Rs. 2,256 crores at 1987 prices. The details of the places where the fires have been extinguished are with me. I don't want to take the time of the House and, therefore, the total recovered...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: You have taken more time Mr. Panja..

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: The total recovered up to 31st March 199[illegible] is 9.5 million tonnes.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Sir, I have asked him about the details of the Action Plan of Coal India. He is replying to the main question again. I did not ask him as to when report came, when they surveyed it and when they gave it to Parliament. I have asked him about the Action Plan of Coal India, and he has not repleid to the main supplemtntary He is just beating about the bush and repeating the same answer which he has already given.

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: I thought he has asked as to how much has been saved.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: There is a language problem between you and me. I spoke in Hindi and you understood in English. So there can be some problem, but I have asked you about the Action Plan.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is the Action Plan?

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: As I have already said, the Action Plan is made in respect of the three main recommendations which needed certain diagnostic studies and, also funds. Funds have been made available in January. Even then, in Block No. 2 the Action Plan has been made operative in the open-cast mines and almost dealt with the fires. The second one was done by Coal India in BCCL at Basuriya—almost dealt with. The third one, Kusunda and the fourth one, Tetulmari, are in progress. Sir, these are the details which I have obtained. Initially, it was to save the time of the House that I did not give the details.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: I too would like to save the time of the House because, if go on repeating

the same thing he is going to give the same reply!

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please ask your second supplementary.

श्री प्रमोद महाजन : मैं दूसरा प्रश्न यह पूछना चाहूंगा कि इस कोल की आग का एक दूसरा पक्ष है जिसमें भारी मात्रा में जीवित होना होता है, खासकर इस झरिया क्षेत्र में बहुत बड़ी जनसंख्या इस जलते कोयले की आग पर रहती है । आग भले ही उस कोल के क्षेत्र में लगी हो जिसके सारे क्षेत्र में नीचे कोयला भरा हुआ होता है और धीरे-धीरे आग आगे बढ़ जाती है । मैं सरकार से यह जानना चाहता हूं कि झरिया से लेकर धनबाद तक इसमें से कितनी जनसंख्या आज इस जलते कोयले की आग पर जीवन जी रही है और इस जनसंख्या को बचाने के लिए आपकी जो कुल योजना है, एक्शन प्लान है उस कुल योजना में इस जनसंख्या को बचाने का क्या विचार है ?

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: Sir, the total number of the population actually affected, that figure is not with me. But it appears that Coal India have been able to delineate the affected area, which is about 17.32 square kilometres, having a coal deposit of 1,864 million tonnes which has been rendered sterile due to fires was... (*Interruptions*) ...

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: I am very sorry, Sir, I am asking you about the human problem.

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: And that is what I am speaking about.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Are you aware as to how many people are living in this fire-affecetd area? ... (*Interruptions*) ...

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: Sir, I am very sorry to say that..... (*Interruptions*).. If I may clear it up, "sterlization" here means the area where there is coal blocked by fire and workers and human beings are being affected. In that area, as I have said, the number of people I do not know, but the area is 17.32 square kilometres the coal blocked is 1,864 million tonnes due to the sterilization. I am sorry, this is a technical language. I myself did not know... (*Interruptions*) ...

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: I am asking you about the non-sterlized sector and you are talking about what you have sterilized. I am talking about the non-sterlized sector where people are living and asking you as to what you are doing with this human problem, and you are talking of technicalities. I may not be a Minister like you...

MR. CHAIRMAN: As far as I could see, the point is whether the sterilized area covers the human beings who are concerned.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: I am asking you about the human population in the area where the fire is still there and where they have not been able to control it.

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: I am very sorry, Sir, I did not want to offend the hon. Member. In fact, initially I myself did not know the meaning of the words "sterlized area." I came to know about it only in the briefing. This is a technical term being used where there is a fire and coal beneath is blocked and cannot be mined. Now, what portion of this shall have to be removed and in what manner, depends on the diagnostic study which I have already mentioned. As for funds, I have already replied to those two questions.

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: Sir, I have a bit of difficulty in totally grasping the reply. Since 1971, the situation is bad. In 1971 as my hon. colleague has mentioned, 70 active fires were raging and 42 collieries were affected; and nearly, 864 million tonnes of coal was lost. If you multiply that figure by the money

equivalent, it is a gigantic amount that has been neglected for the last 22 years. My first question to the hon. Minister would be this. From 1971 till 1991, for 20 years, was any action taken or was the first action taken only in 1991 when a team was sent? Secondly, I would like to draw his attention to the reply today to Unstarred Question No 2313 about a particular fire in the Jharia Coalfields which states that the main problem of fire exists in the Jharia Coalfields under the Bharat Coking Coal Limited. The reply further states that action is being taken or initiated. The point is, how and when the action is being initiated? Is there any serious attention being given to move fast in this area where human lives are effected, the national wealth is affected? The whole area from Jharia to Dhanbad is affected? And, you have said that a certain small area is sterilised. At the risk of repetition of my first question, I would ask Why for 20 years no action was taken? From November 1991 till now, it is a period of 16 months and still it is said that the action plan is now finalised. What is going on? The next part of my question is: When do you expect this would be fully implemented and the lives of people will be taken care of? The hon. Minister has said that he does not have the number of human beings living in that area? Would he find out and report to this House the total number of the population living in the affected area, an extremely dangerous zone?

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: The records are available only from the time of the nationalisation and not before. The records are available from the date of the nationalisation, 1971, which I have already given. I need not trouble hon. Members with more facts on these, 70 active fires and other things.

So far as the total population is concerned, as I said, the figures are not with me. I will write to the hon. Member and inform him about the total population that might be under certain needs to be removed and other things. Again, as I said, it depends on the study.

As for the third point as to when it will be done, it is very difficulty to say. Mine fire is not a thing of India only. Wherever mining takes place, such fires occur, according to the quality of the coal. In India, the combustion period is such that if it touches oxygen, by stacking it for some time, it catches fire on its own. Not that it has to be lit by somebody. It catches fire on its own. Therefore, these are being dealt with accordingly. I cannot give the exact date when it could be done. (*Interruption*). May I complete?

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: For 20 years, from 1971 to 1991, what action was taken?

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: I have already given the answer to the first question as to what steps have already been taken and what steps are being taken.

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: For about 20 years, what was done about it? Were we sleeping or were we attending to that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. No. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: It is only in 1991... (*Interruption*)... the results are coming out. Not that we were sleeping for 20 years. The results of whatever has been done so far have been obtained and I have given them. So far as the question as to by which time all the things will be done is concerned, it is very difficult to say that until the report is made available to me.

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र : सभापति जी, मंत्री महोदय हाल ही में कलचर से कोल में आये हैं, इसलिए इन्फार्मेशन के बारे में और दूसरी चीजों के बारे में कठिनाई जरूर होगी । हम लोगों को भी इसकी दिक्कत होती है । मेरा एक ऐसा अवसर था, इसके पहले जब, झरिया कोयला आग जांच कमेटी बनी थी, इसकी जांच करने के लिये, तो उसका भी मैं सदस्य था । मैं मंत्री महोदय का उन्हीं बिन्दुओं पर ध्यान आकर्षित करूंगा । यह जो आपने कहा है कि डाइगनोस्टिक स्टडी के लिये यह 14.3 मिलियन डालर जो है, यह सिर्फ डाइगनोसिस के लिये है । यह इम्प्रेशन मत दीजिये कि पूरी आग बुझाने के लिये इतने ही रुपये की जरूरत है । अगर यह बात रहती तो यह काम पहले हो जाता । यह खर्च मिलियन में नहीं बिलियन्स में होगा । Am I clear or not?

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: Yes.

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र : तो इसलिये पहले बात यह है कि अगर हाउस को पूरा खर्च आप खबर करना चाहते हैं तो यह खबर कीजिये कि टोटल कास्ट के बारे में कभी क्या आपने सोचा है या डाइगनोस्टिक में ही जा रहे हैं ? एक्सपेरीमेंट तो झरिया आग बुझाने के बारे में बहुत बार हुआ और उसमें कितने मर गये, एक्सपेरीमेंट काल में ही । ऐसा डाक्टर हमको नहीं चाहिए । इसलिये इन लोगों को, शहर को हटाने के लिये, जिसमें पांच लाख पापुलेशन है, वैसे तो अपने देश में पापुलेशन बड़ी तेजी से बढ़ रही है, एक्जेक्ट फिगर कोई नहीं दे सकता, लेकिन वे वहां से शिफ्ट नहीं करना चाहते । उनका वहां पर व्यापार है और उसमें अरबों रुपयों की उनकी लागत है उनको हटाने के लिये उनको मुआवजा देना पड़ेगा और दूसरा एक टाऊन बसाना पड़ेगा यह आग धनबाद को टच नहीं करती है । यह झरिया कोल में है और सभापति महोदय यह सबसे कीमती कोकिंग कोल है । यह बिना वाश किये हुए कोकिंग में है । इसलिये मैं जिस बात की ओर मंत्री महोदय का ध्यान आकर्षित करूंगा वह यह है कि यह सम्पत्ति भारत की जरूर है लेकिन यह विश्व की भी सम्पत्ति है इसलिये क्या राष्ट्रसंघीय एजेंसियों से कहा गया है कि वे भी शेयर करें ?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please put your question.

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: This is the question. Sir, I have come to the question. What I am asking is this. This coking coal wealth is not only the wealth of India but also of the whole world which is burning and to put off the fire world cost billions. So, has the attention of the United Nations agency been drawn to this fact that they should also bear the cost of it because it is a very precious coal and the reserve of the world's coking coal is very limited? What action has been taken in this regard and what is the total amount that the Minister or the Government thinks that it will cost?

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: Sir, if the hon. Member reads out the written answer this amount of 12 million dollars which has been sanctioned and agreed to is to not only for the diogonistic study but also for controlling the fire. It is not only for the study; that is my report which I have given. If I am wrong, I will correct myself.

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: It is better you correct yourself. You have said in the beginning "I am not sure". So you will again put certain things.. (*Interruptions*)..

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: Very well, Sir, the IDA credit which has been sanctioned to us is 12 million U.S. dollars and that has been approved out of the total outlay which I have given in writing.

As regards the steps taken so far, since nationalisation the Government of India has spent Rs. 74 crores for the protection of that area and its populatoin and this amount has been spent only for protection of the Jharia Coalfield. It is true that it contains a high value coal and that is why mining shall have to take place as also the people there have to be protected. This can only be finalised after the diagnostic study is made available and the Government applies its mind...

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: This was not my question. If you want to shift the population, that alone will cost you several hundred crores of rupees.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the world helping? Is the U.N. or somebody else helping?

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: The total cost you have not yet estimated. This is not $ 14.3 million ... (*Interruption*) ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any international help being given?

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: That is what we have discussed.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN: Sir, I think the hon. Minister knows the fact that certain areas of the affected part of Raniganj Coalfield are subsiding and submerging, particularly the Raniganj town. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government will take the necessary action so that these places and the towns that are submerging—Raniganj and other townships—protected from the process of submersion which has started and what steps the Government is taking to see that the population living there is not affected.

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: Before nationalisation coal mining was done in a manner that was not scientific. Coal was extracted by private owners and proper protection was not being taken and that is one of the main causes for the subsidence of the mining areas not only in Raniganj but also in other areas. ... (*Interruptions*) ...

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: There were Mining Inspectors at that time. They were supposed to be inspecting them. What were they doing before the tragedy? (*Interruptions*) ...

SHRI DINESHBHAI TRIVEDI: Now again you are denationalising and giving them to the private sector. (*Interruptions*) ...

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: Before nationalisation what was done was no within the scope of this question. But if the hon. Member is so interested I will try to find out and inform him. The two areas where the subsidence is taking place are the BCCL and ECL areas because of the unscientific mining that took place before Nationalisation. Rupees seventy-four crores have been spent so for to take the steps that have been suggested by various experts to deal with Jharia coalfield fires as far as possible so that the population is saved and at the same time mining should also take place. These are details of technological studies and I find that Coal India is going according to this study and modern methods are being suggested and they are being implemented.

श्री शंकर दयाल सिंह : सरकार चाहती नहीं है । एक ही बात मैं कहना चाहता हूं। सरकार भी नहीं चाहती है कि कोयले में जो

आग लगी हुई है वह बुझे क्योंकि कोल इंडिया और ठेकेदारों ने मिल कर के उसके नाम पर करोड़ों रुपया कमाया है। सरकार अगर एक बात का जवाब दे दे कि कोल इंडिया खुद काम न कर के ठेकेदारों से क्यों काम कराता है और इसका जवाब दे दे कि तीन सालों में कितना पैसा आपने ठेकेदारों को दिया है, यह बताइये। (**व्यवधान**)

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN: He has not said whether the Government is... (*Interruptions*)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister has given the reply. I don't think you can extract more out of him. I think there is nothing more to extract on this question. (*Interruptions*)... So, I will pass on to the next question, Question No. 262, Shri Parmeshwar Kumar Agarwalla.

Agricultural export strategy

@*262. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that an agricultural export strategy is under Government's consideration;

(b) if so, by when it is likely to be finalised and announced; and

(c) what are the items likely to be included in the strategy

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

@Previously Starred Question 162, transferred from 5.3.1993.

Statement

Agricultural Export Strategy

India has a natural comparative advantage in agricultural exports because of our lower import needs of inputs, our reasonable labour costs, and our diverse agro-climatic conditions. Government has, therefore, decided to accord high priority to agricultural exports and has already chalked out a strategy in this connection. While maximising foreign exchange earnings from the agricultural sector, as well as maximising returns to farmers, the strategy would be to do so in a manner that it does not compromise our food security.

A special thrust is being given to exports of horticultural produce and processed foods. Towards this end, substantial allocations have already been made in the VIII Plan.

With the exchange rate adjustments, the introduction of a unified exchange rate, the lowering of customs duties, the easier availability of a credit for exports on softer terms, and changes and simplifications in the EXIM Policy and Procedures, there is an environment in the country today which is highly conducive for exports. Within this environment, the specific programmes undertaken or proposed to be undertaken for the agricultural sector are expected to substantially steps up agricultural exports within the VIII Plan period.

SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, in the changing sceniario of the world the area of importance has shifted from the military power to economical power. In this background, the export strategy of the country becomes extremely important. The first part of my question was, "whether it is a fact that an agricultural export strategy is under Government's consideration". He replied,